

Press Release

January 10, 2005

**DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY ANNOUNCES
TEMPORARY RELIEF MEASURES FOR NATIONALS OF COUNTRIES
AFFECTED BY THE ASIAN TSUNAMI**

The Department of Homeland Security is committed to the global effort to recover from last month's earthquake and tsunami and has announced temporary relief measures that will be made available to those individuals who are unable to return to their home country or are currently traveling in the United States due to the destruction and humanitarian crisis in Southeast Asia.

United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) will expedite the processing of certain immigration applications, including requests for advance parole and relative petitions for minor children from the affected areas. For individuals who have already been paroled into the U.S., the period of parole may be extended. USCIS will also more readily approve applications from visitors from the tsunami-affected countries who are requesting a change or extension of their nonimmigrant status. Standard requirements for security checks will remain in place under expedited procedures.

Beginning January 7, 2005, individuals from either Sri Lanka or Maldives who are under a final order of removal will be granted a stay of removal for 90 days. This temporary suspension is specific to these two countries due to the massive infrastructure damage. The stay is automatic, and no request or petition is necessary. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) will also consider stay of removal requests from non-criminal aliens from countries other than Sri Lanka and Maldives that were affected by the earthquake and tsunami, and temporarily suspend the deportation of any individual presently in the U.S. who would be returned to an area severely affected by the tsunami. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis and based on specific circumstances.

Where appropriate and authorized by law, nonimmigrant visitors and aliens that receive a stay of removal may be eligible to apply for or receive employment authorization so that they may financially support themselves, or potentially help the rebuilding effort by sending remittances to their home country.

DHS will continue to work with other branches of the United States Government to closely monitor developments in the region to determine the need for additional action.

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